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Silence as Gender in the *Roman de Silence*

I'm not putting in anything that will spoil the work,
nor will there be any less truth in it,
for truth should not be silenced (lines 1667-1669)

[N'i metrai rien qui m'uevre enpire
Ne del voir nen iert mos a dire
Car la verté ne doi taisir]

The thirteenth-century French poem the *Roman de Silence* tells the story of Silence, born biologically female but raised as a boy in order to receive their parent's inheritance[1]. The story begins with the romance of Silence's parents, Cador and Eufemie, as they struggle to overcome their own silence and put their feelings for each other into words, and it follows Silence's upbringing as they navigate various gendered expectations. When Silence is a teenager, the personified Nature and Nurture appear to debate Silence's true gender; their debate ends with Silence deciding to live as a man because of men's superior position in society. As a man, Silence briefly joins a pair of traveling minstrels, serves King Evan at court, becomes a knight, and attempts to escape Queen Eufeme's treachery. Finally, after succeeding at the impossible task

[1] The pronouns used to refer to Silence throughout the *Roman de Silence* alternate between he/him and she/her. I use they/them pronouns for Silence throughout this thesis as a way of recognizing the ambiguity of Silence's gender. This is also my own way of being silent on Silence's gender and refraining from making a decision about how this character's gender should be understood.

of discovering Merlin, Silence is revealed to the court to be "truly" a woman. The story ends abruptly after this, as King Evan has his wife killed, restores women's inheritance, and marries Silence.

As a framing for this story, the poet Heldris explains that the *Roman de Silence* is a translation from an earlier Latin work. Through the process of translation, Heldris explains, "a good deal of fiction" ("Avoic le voir sovent mençoigne," line 1664) has been added to the truth of the narrative. This fiction, however, will not detract from the truth of the narrative because "truth should not be silenced" ("Car la verté ne doi taisir," line 1669). In this moment, Heldris explicitly rejects silence. He not only refuses to be silent about the original version of the story that he mentions, but he adds additional language to his French translation as well. However, through Heldris' language, he constructs silence. He produces the character of Silence, who represents the concept of silence itself, and he produces many significant moments of silence throughout the poem, including Cador and Eufemie's silence towards each other, Eufeme and Eufemie's silencing, and Silence's silence after being revealed at the end of the story. Heldris' production of silence through language is significant because this is exactly what happens with the character of Silence, whose identity is produced through the gendered language of others.

Many critics have analyzed how gendered language and silence work together within the *Roman de Silence*. In "Without Magic or Miracle: The 'Romance of Silence' and the Prehistory of Genderqueerness," Masha Raskolnikov reads Silence as a genderqueer figure, whose ambivalence towards their own gender opens up new possibilities for understanding transgender identity and genderqueerness. In "The Idea of the Wilderness: Gender and Resistance in *Le Roman de Silence*," Jessica Barr argues that while Nature and Nurture are ostensibly set up as the essential dichotomy of the text and of the understanding of Silence's gender, they are actually

both aspects of the heteronormative and patriarchal court, and the true binary is this court versus *the bos*. Barr explains that gender is presented as separate from biological sex in the text; instead, gender is understood to be a presentation dependent on the social structure it is a part of. In "Translating Gender in Thirteenth-Century French Cross-Dressing Narratives: *La Vie de Sainte Euphrosine* and *Le Roman de Silence*," Emma Campbell uses Judith Butler's theories of translation and gender as a framework for understanding how gender is constructed through translation. She looks at how Silence is constantly in the process of being defined and translated throughout the text, and how this constant translation is what produces gender in Silence. Finally, Katherine Terrell argues in "Competing Gender Ideologies and the Limitations of Language in *Le Roman de Silence*" that gender is presented as an unstable concept in the poem, as two different competing theories present gender as both unchanging and as flexible; she reads the debate between Nature and Nurture as showing the debate between natural and socially constructed language, showing how intrinsically connected gender and language are.

My own reading of the Roman de Silence builds upon the work of these critics, looking not just at the relationship between gender and language, but gender's location in the structure of language itself. In this paper, I argue that silence is a site of gender production, and that gendered language is used throughout the text to produce both the character and concept of Silence. In the first part of the paper, I look closely at the naming of Silence, analyzing how Cador presents gendered language as natural, and how this naturalness is questioned and complicated by Nature and Nurture's debate. I also look at Silence's moments of self-naming, and how these moments show Silence's own attempts at gendered identity construction. In the second part of the paper, I consider the characters of Eufemie and Eufeme, whose own names highlight different ways that language structures intersect with gender identity. Eufemie and Eufeme also highlight the ways

in which silence is specifically feminized. Finally, I return to the character of Silence to look at how Silence's own silence allows for gendered meaning to be put upon them.

Silence Through Naming

The way silence functions as gender is particularly clear through the character of Silence, who embodies the idea of silence while also having their identity constructed through language. Looking closely at the language used in Silence's naming reveals important aspects of the presumed naturalness of grammatical gender, identity construction, and how translation produces gendered meaning. Notably, Silence's naming comes after Cador and Eufemie's long and significantly silent courtship. Because King Evan has banned women from inheriting land, Cador and Eufemie decide to raise their child as a boy, no matter the child's biological sex. Cador is the one to come up with Silence's name, and it is his beliefs about gender and language that are especially revealed in this moment.

The process of naming Silence is a process of creating identity; this identity creation is especially significant because of how Silence, an allegory for the concept of silence, is constructed through language. Cador begins his naming of Silence by declaring "We shall call her Silence" ("Sel faisons apieler Scilense," line 2067). This statement by itself is an oxymoron because by naming a silence, it can no longer by definition be a silence. By embodying the idea of silence, therefore, Silence changes the meaning of the word and makes it into something new. Instead of just being an absence, silence is a site of creation. Silence is specifically a site of gender creation, as seen through the rest of Silence's naming, as gendered language is constantly put onto them.

Cador continues Silence's naming by explaining that the name "Silence" will have varied masculine and feminine versions. He tells Eufemie,

He will be called Silentius.
And if by any chance his real nature is discovered,
we shall change this -us to -a,
and she'll be called Silentia,
If we deprive her of this -us,
we'll be observing natural usage,
for this -us is contrary to nature,
but the other would be natural (lines 2067-2080)

Il iert només Scilenscius;
Et s'il avient par aventure
Al descovrir de sa nature
Nos muerons cest -us en -a,
S'avra a non Scilencia.
Se nos li tolons dont cest -us
Nos li donrons natural us,
Car cis -us est contre nature,
Mais l'altres seroit par nature.]

Here, Cador presents Silence's gender as constructed through language; Silence's gender changes as the language used to describe them changes. This is seen through the way Cador describes the different possible endings of Silence's name. He first explains that they will call their child Silence, but goes on to add "Silence" will be changed to "Silentius" when they raise Silence as a boy, or "Silentia" if Silence is revealed to be a girl. Changing the ending of Silence's name, as Cador further argues, is a way of "observing natural usage," or following the natural, gendered rules of grammar. Cador emphasizes several times in this quote the naturalness of gendered language, repeating the words "natural" and "nature" several times. The language Cador uses is significant here; he does not simply say that "Silentia" would be better for a girl and "Silentius" for a boy, but that both names are a natural and innate part of their respective genders. Naming Silence "Silentius" actually changes Silence's gender to male, and naming them "Silentia" would make them a woman. In this moment, therefore, it is Cador's language that constructs Silence's gender, which is appropriate as Silence exists only as a future possibility.

Cador's use of gendered grammar reflects a similarly gendered grammar presented by Alain de Lille, a twelfth-century poet and theologian who wrote the philosophical Latin text *The Complaint of Nature*. In *The Complaint of Nature*, the personified Nature comes down to earth to detail how humanity has become sinful and strayed from what is natural. In the text, grammar is presented as something natural, intrinsically entwined with Nature. Yet grammar is also aligned with gender, a fact Nature makes clear when she uses the metaphor of subject and predicate to describe how the masculine and feminine are two distinct parts of nature and grammar. Nature complains that "Man is made woman… the craft of Venus makes him of double gender. He is both predicate and subject, he becomes likewise of two declensions, he pushes the laws of grammar too far" (Metre 1). To Nature, gender correlates with particular parts of speech, namely

the subject and predicate, and any person who does not follow the natural rules of gender also breaks what are presented as the natural rules of grammar. The idea of innately gendered masculine and feminine words directly connects to Cador's naming of Silence, where the grammatical ending of Silence's name is seen to determine their gender.

Despite Nature's emphasis on the masculine and feminine as two binary aspects of nature and grammar, the fact that the *Complaint of Nature* is written in Latin also opens up the possibility of gender neutrality. In Latin, nouns can belong to a feminine, masculine or neuter case. Nature explains the connection between this neutral case and neutrality within gender, saying, "For although natural reason recognizes, as grammar corroborates, two genders specially, namely masculine and feminine–albeit some men, deprived of the sign of sex, can be thought of in my opinion by the designation of neuter" (Prose V). The existence of the neutral case of Latin grammar therefore creates the possibility of neutrality in gender. Silence's name reflects this same logic; while Silentia and Silentius are inherently gendered names that create gender in Silence, the name Silence by itself is a kind of neutral case of the name.

The laws of Latin grammar are also relevant to Silence because the *Roman de Silence* is presented as being a translation from Latin to French. When establishing Silence's story, Heldris explains, "Just as it was written / in the Latin version we read, / we will tell it to you in French" ("Si com l'estorie le nos livre, / Qu'en latin escrite lizons, / En romans si le vos disons," lines 1660-1662). By establishing the *Roman de Silence* as a written Latin story, Heldris calls upon not only the credibility of previous written sources, but the credibility of Latin grammar. Therefore, the framework of a neutral, masculine, and feminine case can be applied to an understanding of Silence's gender.

It is significant that the *Roman de Silence* is translated specifically into the Picard dialect of French as this dialect has ungendered object pronouns, further allowing for the possibility of neutrality within language. In Silence's naming, almost all of the pronouns Cador uses are ungendered object pronouns; the exception is the word "he" or "li" in the line "He will be called Silentius." This neutrality is significant in a moment that so clearly emphasizes the natural grammatical significance of masculinity and femininity. Cador emphasizes the "natural grammar" of "Silentius" and "Silentia," but when he refers to Silence themself using direct or indirect object pronouns, his language is not gendered.

Like Alain de Lille, Heldris includes the specific character of Nature who argues for innate gender and connects this gender to an innate grammar. Nature is the one to create Silence, forming them out of clay to have "more beauty / than a thousand of the most beautiful girls / in the world now possess" ("Metrai plus de bialté ensanble / Que n'aient ore .m. de celes / Qui en cest monde sont plus beles," lines 1882-1884). Nature sees Silence's gender as unchangeable and feminine, claiming that "There is nothing on this earth / created by Nature / that can be dis-natured in the long run" ("Il n'a en tiere nule rien, / Ki par nature ait a durer, / Ki puist al loing desnaturer," lines 2270-2272). For Nature, the fact that Silence was born a girl is an objective and unchangeable fact, something that cannot be altered through naming or by doing different gendered activities, like jousting instead of sewing. Nature's perception of gender is also deeply tied to grammar. Nature chastises Silence for jousting and hunting in the forest, telling them, "Go to a chamber and learn to sew! / That's what Nature's usage wants of you! / You are not Silentius!" (Va en la cambre a la costure, / Cho violt de nature li us. / Tu nen es pas Scilentius!" lines 2528-2530). For Nature, the gendered activities Silence does are connected to the gendered language Silence embodies. Nature argues that Silence's name cannot be

masculine, and Silence cannot perform masculine activities, because Silence is not a boy. Silence's gender is constructed only through Nature's actions, and gendered language should, to Nature, reflect this.

However, unlike Alan's Nature, Nature in the *Roman de Silence* must contend with the characters of Nurture and Reason. Nurture and Reason serve as counterpoints to Nature, arguing that gender and language are changeable. The inclusion of these perspectives immediately makes Nature's argument less believable because it shows that Nature is not unquestionable or completely innate. Unlike *The Complaint of Nature*, which includes no counter-perspective to Nature's argument, the *Roman de Silence* argues against Nature's claim. Immediately after Nature argues that Silence cannot be Silentius and that Silence's behavior is "unnatural" ("n'es pas natureus," line 2554), Nurture rebukes Nature and says, "Nature, leave my nursling alone, / or I will put a curse on you! / I have completely dis-natured her" ("Lassciés ester ma noreçon, / Nature, a la maleÿçon. / Jo l'ai tolte desnaturee," lines 2593-2595). Nurture claims to have power over Nature, having the ability to undo what Nature sees as innate and unchangeable.

Reason further rebukes Nature and dismisses her claims. After both Nature and Nurture present their sides, Reason comes in and

> stated her case, citing examples
> as to why, if she abandoned her nurture
> to take up the habits of nature,
> it would be almost as bad
> as killing herself (lines 2610-2614)

[Li monstre, et dist les oquoisons
Que por li valt mains de la mort
Se il s'acostume et amort
A deguerpir sa noreture
Por faire cho que violt Nature]

Here, Reason supports Nurture's argument by claiming that it is actually Silence's nurtured identity that determines who they are. In fact, Nurture's influence is so much stronger than Nature's that to remove Nurture's influence would kill the only identity Silence has. Reason also presents the nurturing of Silence as something that can be abandoned, meaning it is already present in Silence. In contrast, nature is a habit, or something learned. Reason is ultimately the one to win this debate; after Reason speaks, Silence thinks over their options and decides it would be better to be a man because of their better position in society. Ultimately, including these two alternate perspectives disrupts the innateness of Nature's argument. As Raskolnikov writes, "Silence is written as though there's a danger that Nurture may win the argument, in which case medieval thinkers would have had to acknowledge that sex, at least in narrative contexts, is performative" (197). While Nature ostensibly wins the argument in the very end of the *Roman de Silence*, as Silence is revealed to be a woman and marries the king, the abruptness of this ending, as well as the fact that Nature's side had to be debated at all, drains power from Nature's argument. Nurture and Reason's very inclusions open up the possibility of gender as performative and not innate.

The switching of gendered subject pronouns throughout the *Roman de Silence* further weakens Nature's argument about innate, grammatical gender. Throughout the text, the subject

pronouns used to refer to Silence alternate between “he” and “she.” This alternation occurs sometimes even within the same sentence. When Silence rejects Eufeme’s advances because they do not want their biological sex to be revealed, for example, Heldris writes,

> Nor did the youth who is a girl
> wish to reveal her secret,
> the truth about her nature,
> because he would lose his inheritance (lines 3871-3874)

> [Ne li vallés ki est mescine
> Ne violt pas dire son covine,
> De sa nature verité,
> Qu’il perdroit donques s’ireté]

In this moment, Silence is first explicitly named as a girl, but then the pronouns switch to masculine when talking about how “he would lose his inheritance.” The changing of pronouns used to refer to Silence reflects Silence’s naming, how Cador alternates between Silentia and Silentius. The different pronouns represent different versions of gendered language; referring to Silence by “he” or “she” creates a different understanding of gender in Silence. However, the fact that the pronouns switch back and forth so frequently destabilizes any concrete understanding of Silence’s gender, and actually creates a kind of neutrality. In this way, gendered language is used to create a kind of silence; Silence is constructed through the language used to refer to them.

Campbell and Butler's theories of translation provide another lens to understand the ways in which gender is constructed within Silence. In her recent theories of translatability, Butler argues that because gender is a concept that does not have a clear definition, it causes people to spend more effort putting it into words. This is clearly seen in Silence; because Silence's gender is not straightforward or easy to define, much more language has to be exerted trying to put Silence's gender into words. In naming Silence, Cador gives Silence three different names—Silence, Silentia, and Silentius—because just one name is not sufficient for defining their identity. This shows that the idea of silence, defined by its absence, actually requires a lot of language to bring it into reality and to contain it. Silence, as an allegory for this concept, also requires a lot language to be brought into being. Cador's naming of Silence, in fact, is the process of bringing Silence into being almost more than Silence's birth is, as he constructs Silence out of language.

Campbell expands on Butler's theories of translatability in her analysis of Silence's naming, looking at how the name "Silence" is translated into "Silentius" and "Silentia." When Cador names Silence, he initially gives them a neutral name, saying "We shall call her Silence." This neutral "Silence" is the base of their name that "acquires gendered suffixes through linguistic transposition" (Campbell 248). In other words, the addition of -us and -a creates gender in Silence's originally neutral name. The fact that Silence has a neutral name that only becomes gendered through translation presents the possibility of language existing without gender. This disrupts Nature and Cador's arguments for natural gendered grammar and language.

Indeed, the clearest indication of the possibility of silence—the name, character and idea—as gender neutral in the text is the simple fact that throughout the *Roman de Silence*, Silence is mostly referred to by the neutral case of their name. Silence as a name is a kind of

silent version of Silentius or Silentia, missing any gendered ending. Since language is presented as being inherently gendered, this form of silence offers a conceptual and linguistic escape from this gendering, as well as an escape from the power structures associated with this gendering. Ultimately, the it is the endings of Silence's name that create gendered meaning within the character of Silence. As Silence's name is translated from its neutral form into masculine and feminine versions, meaning is constructed from it. The character of Silence gains significance within a gendered society and is understood in different ways as people put their own meanings onto them. Silence's name also turns the character into an allegory for the concept of silence, an absence of language. As both a site of gender construction and a possibility for gender neutrality, Silence shows the inherent contradictions within gender, language and silence.

While Silence almost exclusively goes by the neutral name "Silence" throughout the text, they do refer to themself as Silentius in one interesting moment. After seeing how successful Silence has been at learning how to be a boy, Nature chastises Silence that they should learn feminine skills instead, saying "You are not Silentius!" ("Tu nen es pas Scilentius!" line 2530). Silence responds,

> "I never heard that before!
> Not Silentius? Who am I then?
> Silentius is my name, I think,
> or I am other than who I was.
> But this I know well, upon my oath,
> that I cannot be anybody else!
> Therefore, I am Silentius,

as I see it, or I am no one." (lines 2531-2538)

["Tel n'oï onques!
Silencius! qui sui jo donques?
Silencius ai non, jo cui,
U jo sui altres que ne fui.
Mais cho sai jo bien, par ma destre,
Que jo ne puis pas altres estre!
Donques sui jo Scilentius,
Cho m'est avis, u jo sui nus."]

In this moment, Silence connects the name "Silentius" to their innate sense of being, and to the only identity they have. According to Silence, "Silentius is my name… or I am other than who I was." This phrasing equates naming and identity; who Silence is as a person is completely dependent on the name they have. This connects back to the idea of language being a natural part of reality, as Cador and Nature both believe that the ending of a name determines the gender of its holder. It also points to the impossibility of a silent Silence; language must be used to call Silence into being, whether this is from other characters or themself. For Silence, the masculine name Silentius does not just symbolize their gender as a boy, but contributes to their entire sense of self. This is expanded on in the rest of Silence's response to Nature: "But this I know well… / that I cannot be anybody else! / Therefore, I am Silentius, / as I see it, or I am no one." This logic is very circular: Silence must be who they are, therefore they cannot be anybody else. As

confusing as this logic is, though, it provides a clear example of how language constructs reality, specifically gendered reality, and truth.

Immediately after deciding that they are unequivocally Silentius, Silence

convinced herself
that Nature's spurious argument was plausible:
that because the -us was contrary to usage
her name was not Silentius (lines 2539-2542)

[Dont se porpense en lui meïsme
Que Nature li fait sofime:
Por cho que l'-us est encontre us
N'a pas a non Scilentius]

It is interesting that Silence so quickly changes their mind after stating so certainly that they must be Silentius and cannot be anyone else. By rejecting the name Silentius in this moment, then, Silence grapples with the problem of constant naming. This moment also connects back to Cador's initial naming of Silence, and the idea that -us is the natural ending for a masculine name. However, in this moment this argument is explicitly labeled "spurious," or false. While Nature's claim that Silence cannot be "Silentius" is briefly accepted by Silence, it is rejected by the narrator.

Silence themself rejects this identity when they briefly rename themself Malduit. When Silence runs away with a pair of minstrels minstrels, Silence

changed his name

to an even stranger one.

In public, he called himself Malduit,

because he thought himself very badly brought up,

very badly educated with regard to his nature (lines 3175-3179)

[Car cil a fait de son non cange,

Si l'a mué por plus estrange.

A cort se fait nomer Malduit,

Car il se tient moult por mal duit,

Moult mal apris lonc sa nature]

Like the name Silence, the name Malduit has a lot of symbolic significance, literally meaning "badly brought up." By renaming themself Malduit, Silence creates a new identity for themself. This identity is in some ways an attempt to escape the identity of Silence, to sever themself from their past and be someone entirely new, but it is also a direct reflection on Silence's relationship to their parents and their past, as the literal meaning of their name reflects their upbringing. While this could be read as a moment of self-silencing, as Silence silences their birth name, it is really a moment of creating language as Silence attempts to reconstruct their identity outside of the allegory of silence. This moment also once again brings up the idea of nature, and how nature relates to language, naming and identity. When Silence returns to their family, the identity of Malduit serves as a disguise, preventing Cador from recognizing Silence. Cador is initially upset

when he sees Malduit, thinking that Malduit is his child, then thinking he's imagining things. It is only when Silence confesses that they are actually Silence and shows Cador their cross-shaped birthmark that Cador believes who Silence is. Language can be a way of obscuring identity; by calling themself Malduit, Silence becomes unrecognizable from the child Cador named. In this way, then, language both creates and obscures truth in the text.

Silence's decision to rename themself "Malduit" returns the poem to the earlier moment of Silence's own act of naming, "I am Silentius, / as I see it, or I am no one." Earlier, Silence asserts that the name Silentius makes up their whole identity, and that to be anyone else makes them "other than who I was." However, by renaming themself Malduit, Silence embraces this instability. Silence decides that they do want to be other than who they were, and to let go of the name Silentius, as well as the identity of Silence. Altogether, the different moments of Silence's naming reveal the complications inherent within silence, language, and gender, and show both how gendered language constructs Silence, and how Silence subverts the expectations of gendered language and identity.

Eufeme/ie

Heldris deepens his exploration of the creation of identity through silence and language through the characters of Eufemie and Eufeme, who serve as allegories for feminine language. Eufemie and Eufeme are the two most significant female characters in the text, each with their own relationship to the character and concept of Silence. Eufemie, Cador's wife and Silence's mother, begins the story with significant agency but loses her agency and language as she adopts a more feminine role of marriage and motherhood. Eufeme, King Evan's wife who attempts to seduce and then betray Silence, constantly deceives and manipulates others until she is violently

silenced at the end of the poem. Importantly, both characters have almost interchangeable names, with just one letter differentiating them, and they both represent forms of feminine language and silence.

At their core, both Eufemie and Eufeme's names contain the word "feme," or woman," but the endings of their names create different meanings within them. Eufemie's name translates to "euphemism," representing a pleasant piece of language that replaces something potentially unpleasant. Eufeme, in contrast, is translated by Sarah Roche-Mahdi as "Alas! Woman!" (xx), representing a frustration with women. The way in which their names create different meanings through the addition of different endings reflects Silence's naming. Just as "Silentia" and "Silentius" can be understood of as translations that add gendered meaning to the name Silence, Eufemie and Eufeme are two possible translations of the root word "feme." Both Eufemie and Eufeme represent different ideas of femininity, with Eufemie representing pleasant silencing and Eufeme representing deceptive language. Interestingly, Eufeme's name is closer to the root word "feme," implying that she may be a more true translation of femininity.

While both characters have names that represent pieces of language, Eufemie's name, "euphemism," is especially revealing when considering the relationship between femininity and silence. A euphemism is a kind of silence, as a potentially unpleasant word is replaced with something more pleasant. "Eufemie," then, could be understood as a more pleasant replacement for "Eufeme." If Eufeme is a more loyal translation of "feme," then Eufemie as a character is a pleasanter version of what women actually are. Because Eufemie is silent throughout most of the text, as explored in the next section, this implies that the pleasanter version of a woman is one who is silent.

The similarity between Eufemie and Eufeme's names is especially clear through their confusion within the text. When Evan tells Eufeme that he wants to bring Silence back to court after their exile in France, he calls Eufeme "bele Eufemie" (line 5206). This mistake is clearly part of the original text as it rhymes with "mie" (line 5205) in the line before, thus making "Eufemie" in this line a vital part of the language of the poem. If Eufeme's real name were used instead, the rhyming and rhythm of the poem would be disturbed. This confusion demonstrates how connected Eufemie and Eufeme are, despite their vastly different personalities. The fact that their names are just one letter apart means that the reader has to work to differentiate and disentangle them.

The similarity between Eufemie and Eufeme is further drawn by the fact that they are both pieces of language to be glossed. Glossing is a type of analysis or annotation that was added to medieval texts. Glossing began with early Scripture as a way to give additional explanation to the text, and it grew throughout the medieval era until glosses sometimes overtook the original texts themselves (Dinshaw 121). Glossing became a way for people to provide their own interpretations of texts as the glossator, with all of their own biases and beliefs, creates their own meaning out of a text. Since glossators have historically been men, the meaning they make out of the text has also been a product of masculinity and the patriarchy. In her essay "'Glose/bele chose': The Wife of Bath and Her Glossators,'" Carolyn Dinshaw reads glossing as a masculine act done onto feminine bodies. Looking specifically at "The Wife of Bath," one of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Dinshaw examines how the Wife of Bath herself, a wealthy cloth merchant who gains her power and money through her manipulation of her husbands in her first three marriages, becomes "an embodiment of the letter of the text" (114) and is as a result glossed by her husbands. Dinshaw continues that this "masculine glossing does not come without violence

to the feminine corpus" (130-131). For the Wife Bath, this is seen through the violence inflicted on her by her husbands in her later marriages. Both Eufemie and Eufeme, representing physical pieces of language, are also glossed in the *Roman de Silence* by male characters, and Dinshaw's analysis of glossing in the "Wife of Bath" provides a useful lens for understanding this glossing.

Eufemie as Feminine Silence

Eufemie's increasing silence as she assumes a more feminine role throughout the *Roman de Silence* exemplifies the feminization of silence; this silence is particularly notable because Eufemie begins the romance with a significant of agency, assuming what is typically a masculine role in medieval romances. Eufemie's character is initially introduced as a prize for Cador for killing a dragon, but it quickly becomes clear that she has an equal amount of agency and respect to Cador. She is "the wisest doctor in the land" ("El païs n'a si sage mie, line 594) and "well versed in the seven arts" ("Des .vii. ars ert moult bien aprise," line 403) and because of her skill as a doctor, Eufemie is also given her own choice in who to marry. King Evan tells her "there was no prince so rich / that Eufemie couldn't have as lord and husband… / provided that she cure his nephew" ("N'i a prince si riche mie / Qu'a baron ne l'ait Eufemie… / Mais que son neveu li garisse," lines 605-609). Each of these descriptions—being a well respected doctor, being highly educated in the seven arts, and being given a spouse as a prize—are traits typically reserved for male knights in medieval romances. As Raskolnikov explains, "It is an understatement to say that to be versed in the seven liberal arts is not a common description for a female character" (190). The word "mie," used to describe Eufemie as a doctor, is also specifically the masculine version of the word for "doctor." It is striking that Eufemie's agency comes from traits that are

typically reserved for masculinity as this draws a connection between masculine language and agency.

Eufemie's initial agency is further seen through the power she has over Cador, as she both saves his life and silences him. When Cador is injured by the dragon, Eufemie is called to nurse him back to health. She tells Cador explicitly, "I served you as physician, / I saved you from the venom" ("Qu'esté vos ai en liu de mie. / Del venim vos ai fait delivre," line 938-939), showing that she is aware of and intentional about the power she holds over Cador's life. In addition, because of Eufemie's skill in medicine and her power over Cador, she is able to silence him. When deciding whether or not to confess his feelings to Eufemie, Cador reasons, "I could reveal my love to her, / but her efforts and her medicines / might then be a reproach to me" ("Jo li puis bien amor rover, / Mais or me poroit reprover / Son traval et sa medecine," lines 653-655). It is specifically Eufemie's skill as a doctor, her "efforts and her medicines," that causes Cador to doubt himself; because Eufemie does not hold the typical feminine role of subservience and objectification, Cador cannot follow the rules of the courtly romance and confess his feelings. Raskolnikov explains that because of Cador and Eufemie's relative equality, Cador does not just desire Eufemie but "desires Eufemie's desire" (192). The prioritization of Eufemie's desires destabilizes the language of the typical medieval romance and silences both characters, causing Cador to decide "it's better to be silent" ("mioldres pooirs est taisir," line 676). In this way, the very concept of silence destabilizes traditional gender norms.

Interestingly, it is Eufemie's mis-speech that ultimately breaks her and Cador's silence and allows them to confess their love. Eufemie tells Cador, "Ami, speak, ah me!" ("Amis, parlés, haymmi!" line 882), and Cador is able to figure out from this speech that Eufemie loves him. Heldris explains,

she should have said, “Speak to me,”

but she says, “Speak, ah me.” …

Now [Cador] thinks he has figured the whole thing out.

These two utterances, “ah me” and “ami,”

have brought him great comfort.

The word “ami” is evidence of love,

the words “ah me” say it loud and clear. (lines 885-900)

[Que dire dut: “Parlés a moi,”

Se li a dit: “Parlés, haymmi!” …

Or cuide avoir tolt asomé.

Cist doi mot “haymmi!” et “amis”

Li ont moult grant confort tramis.

Cis mos “amis” mostre l’amor,

Cis mos “haymmi” fait le clamor.]

It is significant that it is Eufemie’s mis-speech that allows them to confess their love because this shows that she has power over language in this moment. Interestingly, however, it is not a conscious speech on Eufemie’s part. Rather, it is language speaking through Eufemie. This moment is also significant because of how Cador glosses Eufemie’s speech. He is able to determine from the words she uses that she is in love with him; the glossing of her speech mirrors Dinshaw’s discussion of glossing in the “Wife of Bath’s Prologue,” as Eufemie’s

feminine language is glossed by a male interpreter. This moment of speech also marks the end of Eufemie's agency. While she has agency in this moment through her language, this is taken away when she and Cador get married. Once the silence between Cador and Eufemie has been broken and they confess their love, traditional gender norms are restored and Eufemie's language is taken away.

In addition to glossing Eufemie's speech, Cador also glosses Eufemie herself. After Eufemie's mis-speech, Cador tells Eufemie that there is only one woman in the kingdom he wants to marry. Heldris explains,

> Belle Eufemie, she's the "one"
> who is the choice of Cador's heart.
> Eufemie is the gloss of "one."
> But she doesn't dare take it as a reference to herself;
> there's not enough daring in her
> to gloss it as referring to herself (line 985-990)

> [Biele Eufemie, cho est l'une
> A cui li cuers Cador s'aüne!
> De l'une est Eufemie gloze,
> Mais que sor li prendre ne l'oze,
> Qu'en li n'en a pas tant d'ozer
> Qu'ele sor li l'oze glozer]

As Dinshaw explains when analyzing "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," glossing is often a masculine act done onto the feminine body. Cador specifically glosses Eufemie when he declares that she is the "one" he wants to marry, interpreting her body in reference to himself. It is especially significant that Eufemie, as an allegory for "euphemism" and a piece of physical language, is able to be glossed, and is not able to gloss in return. It is Eufemie's position as a piece of text to be interpreted that prevents her from interpreting herself. This also marks a shift in Eufemie having power over Cador's language and body to Cador having power over her language and body.

Eufemie's loss of agency is further exemplified by Cador's use of the pronoun "we" when naming Silence, as he speaks for both himself and Eufemie. Cador uses the pronoun "we" throughout his naming of Silence, beginning with "We shall call her Silence." This pronoun is significant because it shows that Cador is speaking on behalf of Eufemie; Eufemie never gives her own opinion on Silence's naming other than to agree with her husband. Therefore, the use of "we" is a type of silencing, as Eufemie does not get the chance to speak for herself. Cador's use of "we" is also interesting because it is a pronoun that is both masculine and feminine, representing both Cador and Eufemie's identities. Pronouns are one example of how language is often described in gender binaries, and the pronouns used to refer to Silence are one example of how gendered language is put onto Silence. Therefore it is interesting to view the pronoun "we" as existing outside of this binary and encompassing both masculine and feminine; at the same time, this pronoun represents Cador's identity imposed over Eufemie's.

Cador's use of the pronoun "we" connects more broadly to his theories of gender. Cador explicitly offers his theory of gender and marriage shortly after he marries Eufemie. He explains that Eve was made of Adam's rib "so that they would be of one mind, / as they are made of one

substance" ("Qu'ensi fuscent d'une voellance / Com il sunt fait d'une sustance," lines 1707-1708). Marriage, then, is a melding of identities as two people become one. This is also a merging of genders, as the masculine and feminine combine together to create one singular unit. Cador applies this specifically to his marriage with Eufemie, telling her, "Since, my sweet, our flesh is one, / let our will be one as well" ("Biele, quant nostre cars est une, / Soit nostre volentés commune," lines 1721-1722). This merging of wills is not equal, however. It is Cador's will that encapsulates Eufemie's will, as Cador determines the plan for naming and raising Silence, and Eufemie agrees completely to his ideas. She tells Cador, "Sweet lord, / nothing that your heart desires / will I refuse you" ("Bials sire, / Ja rien que vostres cuers desire / N'orés par moi estre escondie," lines 1725-1727). Eufemie does not retain any of her own identity or will to be able to refuse Cador anything. Eufemie's silence therefore is a result of her marriage with Cador and her identity becoming indistinguishable with Cador's identity.

Eufemie's silencing is complete when she gives birth to Silence. After Silence's birth, Eufemie rarely speaks again and is hardly mentioned in the text. Giving birth to Silence is the conclusive moment of Eufemie's silence because in this moment Eufemie completely conforms to her feminine role. In courtly society, women's importance comes from their ability to give birth to children and continue the line of inheritance. By giving birth to Silence, Eufemie completely gives up her masculinized agency from the beginning of the poem and fulfills the role expected of her as Cador's wife. In addition, Eufemie does not just become a mother, but she also gives birth to the physical idea of silence. By producing silence with her body, silence is also produced within Eufemie. Literally, "euphemism," a type of speech, is silent. Ultimately, Eufemie's silence is significant because it shows the feminization of silence, and it shows how pervasive silence can be. Instead of language being put onto silence, as it is during Silence's

naming, silence is put onto Eufemie's language. The fact that Eufemie, representing a piece of ideal feminine language, is silent implies that the ideal of feminine language is actually no language at all.[2]

Eufeme's Deception

Eufeme has her own relationship to silence, language and femininity. Unlike Eufemie, Eufeme is not silent throughout most of the text; she is constantly speaking in order to manipulate and deceive other characters, especially King Evan and Silence. She attempts to seduce Silence by tricking them, frames Silence for attempted rape when they reject her, switches out Evan's letter to the king of France to try and trick the French king into killing Silence, and manipulates Evan into sending Silence on an impossible quest to find Merlin. By using her language in this way, Eufeme rejects the silent role women are expected to conform to and instead attempts to embrace masculine language. However, her attempts to harm others using her language are all ultimately ineffective, and by the end of the text Eufeme is violently silenced, finally returning to feminine silence.

Eufeme's language is constantly referred to as being deceptive and manipulative, going against expectations of femininity, as seen through her deception and framing of Silence. She schemes to get Silence in a room alone with her after they reject her advances, eventually

[2]Eufemie's silence evokes Enide's silence in Erec and Enide, a twelfth century poem written by Chrétien de Troyes. In the romance, Erec gives up his knighthood to spend time with his new wife, Enide. When he learns that the court now looks down on him for his laziness, he blames Enide and decides to test her love for him by having her follow silently behind him away from court. Enide agrees to do as Erec demands, but every time she sees a possible threat to Erec's life she speaks aloud to warn him, breaking Erec's demand. Enide and Eufemie have many similarities, but their silences are presented in different ways: Eufemie's silence is presented as a part of her ideal femininity, while Enide's silence would be a danger to Erec's life. Both Enide and Eufemie's silences are a result of their gender, and specifically their gendered relationships with their husbands and families. Eufemie only becomes silent after her marriage to Cador, when Cador begins to speak for the two of them. Enide, too, only becomes silent because of her marriage to Erec, as he literally orders her to be silent.

deciding to “pretend to be nice to the youth / in order to lure him into her room” (Le vallet violt bel sanblant faire, / Sel poroit en sa cambre atraire,” line 3979-3980); once Silence is alone with her she announces, “I’ve tricked you, / and I’ve got you here now” (“Mais tant ai fait par mon engien, / Enon Deu, que jo vos i tiengn,” lines 4059-4060). In many ways, this goes against the expectations of femininity. Unlike Eufemie, who is almost completely silent about her desire for Cador and silent once she marries him, Eufeme openly declares that she has sexual desires and attempts to act upon them. Eufeme’s accusation of rape against Silence also goes against expectations of femininity because, while men were convicted of rape during this time, convictions did not happen because of women’s direct testimony. This parallels Eufemie’s assumption of typically masculine roles. While Eufeme’s deception is vastly different from Eufemie’s education and rescue of Cador, it is significant that both characters are able to use and control language while assuming typically masculine roles.

Eufeme’s manipulation of language also mirrors the Wife’s manipulation of her first three husbands in Chaucer’s “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue.” In this story, the Wife constantly tells her husbands that when they are drunk they tell her horrible, misogynistic things, like that “just as worms destroy a tree, / Right so a wife destroys her husband” (“right as wormes shende a tree, / Right so a wyf destroyeth hire housbonde,” lines 376-377). She freely admits that “all was false” (“al was fals, line 382), but that she does not regret any of her manipulation. She claims, “For half so boldly can there no man / Swear and lie, as a woman can” (“For half so boldely kan ther no man / Swere and lyen, as a womman kan,” lines 227-228). For the Wife, “swearing” and “lying” show that women have a power over language that men cannot achieve; they are able to claim things with no basis in fact that are believed by others. Indeed, the Wife’s husbands always believe the Wife’s word over their own lived experiences. The Wife’s ability to manipulate and

gaslight her first three husbands shows her power over language, how she is able to create a new reality through her language and use it for her benefit. Eufeme attempts to do the same thing, as she swears and lies for personal gain. Interestingly, the Wife presents her deception as a result of her femininity, not an attempt to assume masculinity. The Wife explicitly explains that "swearing" and "lying" are skills that women have and men do not.

Eufeme's deception is also consistently referred to as being the result of her femininity, despite the ways in which she attempts to assume masculine language. While femininity is presented as ideally being silent and euphemistic, Heldris presents Eufeme's actions as the result of a twisted femininity and Eufeme as a "female Satan" ("Sathanas," line 3699). When Silence rejects Eufeme and she begins to plot against them, for example, Heldris explains her actions as a result of hysterical female rage, explaining, "When a woman is dominated by anger, / she is completely out of control" ("En feme a grant desmesurance / Quant ire le sorporte et vaint," line 3918-3919). He explains that Eufeme's dramatic reversal from loving Silence to hating them is predictable because "A woman never wearies / of changing her feelings like this" ("Car feme n'est mie laniere / D'amor cangier en tel maniere," line 3901-3902). Even the way in which she frames Silence is presented as feminine, "for a woman always cries as a strategy / when she wants to accomplish something deceitful" ("Car feme plore par voidie / Quant aënplir violt sa boisdie," line 4157-4158). It is significant that Eufeme's attempts to assume masculine language are interpreted as feminine because this demonstrates how ineffective her attempts at masculinity are. Importantly, Eufeme's deceptions are all almost entirely ineffective, as well. While she manages to convince Evan that Silence attempted to rape her, for example, she is not able to actually move Evan to action.

In addition to attempting to use her language as a tool for manipulation, Eufeme uses her own body as a tool for manipulation, seen through the way she makes her body into a piece of evidence to be glossed when she frames Silence. When Silence rejects Eufeme's advances for the second time, Eufeme begins to attack herself: "She gave herself a punch in the nose, / so that she was covered with blood. / She shed tears, but without making noise or crying" ("Fiert soi el nés de puign a ente: / Del sanc se solle et ensanglente. / Plore sans noise et sans criër," lines 4077-4079). Eufeme attacks herself in order make her body serve as false evidence against Silence. Like Eufemie, Eufeme is a piece of feminine language to be glossed by male glossators. As Dinshaw argues, this male glossing is necessarily an act of violence on the feminine text. Eufeme embraces this act of violence, embracing her role as text and her own objectification.

Eufeme is explicitly told to be silent by King Evan at the end of the poem, when Merlin comes to court and begins to reveal everyone's secrets. In this moment, Evan foregrounds women's silence as the expected norm. When Eufeme threatens Merlin for revealing everyone's secrets, Evan interupts her to say,

> You will kindly allow me to speak and act
> according to my pleasure.
> A woman's role is to keep silent…
> They're all alike,
> and it's hardly a coincidence
> that there isn't one in a thousand
> who wouldn't earn more praise by keeping silent
> than by speaking (lines 6396-6406)

[Moi lasciés convenir et dire,

Faire mon bon et mon plasir.

Sens de feme gist en taisir…

Toltes l'ont commun,

Se n'est par aventure alcune,

Mais entre .m. nen a pas une

Ki gregnor los n'eüst de taire

Que de parler]

Evan articulates the gendered expectations for silence and language. As king, he has the right to "speak and act" however he wants. As a woman, however, Eufeme's role is only to be silent. Evan generalizes from just Eufeme to say that all women should keep silent, saying that all women are alike. This mirrors the confusion between Eufeme and Eufemie; despite their vastly different personalities, they are thought of as symbols of the same thing. They are both ultimately expected to be silent, showing how silence is feminized. Shortly after this moment, Eufeme is revealed to be having an affair, and Evan sentences her to being drawn and quartered. This is the final moment of Eufeme's silencing. Because she is not silent willingly, and because she does not assume an expected feminine role, she has to be violently silenced. This violent silencing is accepted by the rest of the characters, and "No one was sorry for Eufeme" ("Nus hom qui fust ne plainst Eufeme," line 6653).

While Eufeme's deception and framing of Silence shows the ways in which she attempts to assume masculine language and is ultimately punished for it, Eufeme's deception with Evan's letter further shows the ways in which Eufeme and Evan's identities are represented through written language. After Eufeme attempts to frame Silence for rejecting her, Evan sends Silence away to the French king to keep them safe. Evan writes a letter to send with Silence, but Eufeme switches out this letter with one of her own, telling the French king to kill Silence immediately. Eufeme's deception is ultimately ineffective, as it always is, because the French king's advisors gloss her letter and determine that they should not kill Silence. All of the miscommunication that ensues during this scene reveals important aspects of how written language relates to identity, both for Evan and Eufeme, as well as how meaning is put onto Silence, as Silence serves as the messenger of this letter.

When Eufeme switches out Evan's letter, she attempts to assume the king's identity, thus also assuming everything that the king's identity represents. In his role as king, Evan is an embodiment of the heteronormativity and patriarchy of the court; it is Evan's initial decree that prevents women from inheriting and sets the events of the story in motion, Evan who orchestrates Cador and Eufemie's marriage, and Evan who exposes Silence at the end of the story. Evan embodies all of the ideas and norms of the court, and he embodies the court itself. Because of Evan's role, he is rarely ever silent in the text. As he tells Eufeme, he is "allowed to speak and act / according to [his] pleasure" (lines 6396-6397). His language, particularly his written decrees, control how other characters in the story act, without other characters being able to influence him. It is significant, therefore, that by switching out Evan's letter, Eufeme silences him. She prevents his words from reaching the French king, while at the same time assuming everything that the king's language represents.

Moreover, Eufeme's adoption of Evan's identity is particularly pointed due to the form it takes: a letter. Letters transfer a writer's words and identity across space and time. Notably, Evan can only be silenced through this written form; when he writes his words down to be passed through and interact with many different people, his words become distanced from himself and they are able to be intercepted and changed. This unique nature of letters is captured in an analysis of a much earlier text, "The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle," in which Susan Kim describes the genre of the letter, and the way it distances a person's words from the person themself. As Kim argues, all writing involves a separation of the author from their writing, but the letter especially emphasizes this separation because the letter writer creates a separate "I" in the text of the letter who is sent away from the author themself. This "I" can be interpreted and interacted with separately from the "I" of the author. By dictating his letter to the French king, Evan creates an "I" of the king that is separate from himself and free to be interpreted without his presence. This identity, then, is switched out and assumed by Eufeme instead. The letter is also significant because as a piece of physical text, it can be preserved and referred back to, unlike something that is just spoken out loud. In fact, Eufeme's letter is then sent back to Evan as evidence, and he is able to see for himself that the letter was switched out. Altogether, the genre of the letter is important because it separates Evan from his writing and allows him to be silenced.

The physical writing of the letter itself is also interesting because it is an act of translation. In order to write the letter, Evan dictates what he wants to say to his chancellor, and the chancellor is the one to physically write the king's words down. Evan tells the chancellor, "My friend, write a letter for me at once" ("Amis, escris me tost un brief," line 4301), and after dictating what he wants the chancellor to say, "he left, / and the chancellor got busy writing

immediately" ("Cho dist li rois et dont s'en torne, / Et cil d'escrire tost s'atorne," lines 4313-4314). This is an act of translation, as the king's words are translated by the chancellor, especially since the chancellor only writes the letter once Evan has left the room, meaning he has complete control over how the words are phrased, or even exactly what they say. Despite the chancellor being the one to physically write the letter, however, the letter is always referred to as being the literal words of King Evan. Through this act of translation, therefore, the chancellor, like Eufeme, takes on the identity of king. He embodies the same values that Evan represents. This act of translation is important because it shows how identity interacts with physical writing, and how identity can be transferred.

When Eufeme's letter reaches the court of the king of France, it, much like Eupheme herself, is glossed by the French king's advisors. These advisors each read the letter in their own way and apply their own meaning to what is written, ultimately making their decisions about their own philosophies of friendship and honor. Their glossing of the letter reflects the Wife's glossing in *The Wife of Bath*, as well as the glossing done on Eufeme and Eufemie. In fact, their glossing of the letter is a kind of glossing of Eufeme because they are glossing her words, and therefore her language and identity. At the end of their discussion, the advisors determine that Evan did not in fact write the letter, saying, "In fact, Sire, I would swear to it / that he never sent such a letter" ("Jo ne cuic mie, par mon cief, / Qu'il onques envoiast tel brief," lines 4840-4841). The advisor's glossing of the Eufeme's letter is successful, then, as they are able to determine its truth just by analyzing its language. In addition, once again, Eufeme's adoption of Evan's identity is unsuccessful, as the advisors are able to determine that it is not Evan's writing. Because of this, the advisor's glossing of the letter is specifically a glossing of Eufeme and her language.

Silence's Final Silence

The final part of the letters scene, when the advisors send a letter back to Evan and the miscommunication is cleared up, returns to the idea of identity and meaning being put onto silence, as well as silence as a potential escape from gendered structures. After the advisors determine that the letter is false and they should not kill Silence, they send another letter back to Evan to clear up the miscommunication. This letter is sent directly to Evan with fewer intermediaries, and therefore reaches its intended audience without confusion. The letter is carried by "the most dependable young man" ("Ki miols sace entendre raison," line 4880) in the French king's household directly to King Evan. When he finds Evan,

> He came to him in private,
> greeted him, and gave him the letters,
> which did not go astray.
> The king himself broke the wax (lines 4886-4889)

> [Cil vint a lui, le brief li done.
> Priveëment l'a salué.
> Li brief ne sunt pas eskivé.
> Li rois meïsmes prent le eire]

It is significant that the messenger finds Evan in private, and that Evan is the one to break the seal on the letters himself. Since the messenger does not interact with anyone else before giving

the letter to Evan, there is no opportunity for additional translation or interference within the letter. Evan then sends his own letter back to the French king in a similar way, writing it and sending it himself without a chancellor. The messenger for this letter "found the king in a meadow / and presented him with the sealed letter" ("Le roi i trueve en un praël / Se li presente son seël, lines 5107-5108). The meadow is a significant location because it implies privacy and separation from the court. It is distance from others, with fewer people complicating the translation, that leads to clearer communication.

It is also significant that Evan is the one to break the wax on the letter, as the breaking and sealing of the letters with wax is one important part of how identity is put onto the letters. When Eufeme's letter is originally sent to the king of France, it is sealed with King Evan's wax seal by the chancellor. This marker of King Evan's identity is seen to be proof that the letter was written by him, even though both the writing and sealing were done by the chancellor. This sealing of a letter with wax is a way of putting identity on a piece of writing because somebody's seal is a unique marker of them. Wax itself is a kind of silence; it is blank and malleable, and it does not hold any identity or meaning until meaning is imprinted upon it. This mirrors Silence's naming as silence, defined by its absence, is constructed by others imprinting their meaning upon it. Just as gendered meaning is put onto Silence during their naming, gendered meaning is also put onto the wax, which holds the identity of Evan as king.

The sealing of the letters with wax also connects to Silence's role as the messenger of Eufeme's letter, and Silence's silence throughout the letters section overall. Silence is silent from the time Eufeme frames them until the miscommunication of the letters is cleared up. It is Silence's femininity that prevents them from speaking when Eufeme frames them. Silence thinks to themself, "Even if I were to tell the king the truth, / there's no way [Evan] would believe me /

unless he knew my real nature" ("Encor desisse al roi le voire / Il ne m'en poroit mie croire, / Se il ne seüst ma nature," lines 4169-4171), ultimately deciding there is nothing they could say out loud that would help their cause. It is specifically Silence's "real nature" that prevents them from speaking, further emphasizing the connection between silence and femininity. Silence's silence continues as they carry Eufeme's letter to the king of France. They serve as a messenger for Eufeme and Evan's language and identity, but they have no input of their own. When the advisors gloss Eufeme's letter, they never question Silence or ask for their side of the story. It is only Eufeme and Evan's language, and the advisors' own interpretations, that is important. The character of Silence serves as a messenger for language, but does not provide any language of their own, therefore making the idea of silence serve as a messenger for language. The outcome of this message also affects the physical body of Silence, since it could lead to Silence being killed. Thus, meaning and action, and possibly even violence, are put onto the idea and the character of Silence. Throughout the whole miscommunication of the letters, people constantly put their own meanings onto what is available to them. The advisors each put their own meaning onto the letter, meaning is put onto wax, and meaning is put onto Silence themself even though they do not speak.

Finally, the last significant moment of Silence's silence occurs at the very end of the poem, when Silence is revealed to be "truly" a woman; this silence further emphasizes the connection between silence and femininity. When Merlin comes to court and reveals that Silence "is a girl beneath his clothes" ("Si est desos les dras meschine," line 6536), Evan orders Silence to be undressed and declares that Silence is actually a woman. Silence does get to explain their story at this time, and they explain why they did not speak up against Eufeme before, ending their statement with "nor do I care to keep silent any longer" (Ne jo n'ai soig mais de taisir," line

6627). This, however, is one of the final things Silence says in the text. After Silence's explanation, Evan very quickly has Eufeme killed, restores women's inheritance, and marries Silence, and the poem ends. Silence's feelings about marrying the king and living as a woman are never given. Like Eufemie, Silence becomes silent when they assume the feminine role of wife. The abruptness of this ending, however, disrupts any feeling of satisfaction or return to normal. The text itself is silent about what happens next in the story; while language is constantly put onto silence and used to construct silence, it is silence that is put over language in the end. All of the gendered contradictions within silence—its connection to femininity, its place as a site of both masculine and feminine language construction, its potential for neutrality—are what the *Roman de Silence* leaves the reader with.

Ultimately, the *Roman de Silence* uses silence as a method of exploring gender. Silence's naming reveals how grammar and language can produce gender in silence, but also how gender neutral language can be a kind of silence within language. Translation and name endings specifically are ways in which meaning is put onto silence. Eufemie and Eufeme both reveal how silence can be specifically feminized; Eufemie represents an ideal feminine silence, while Eufeme attempts to assume masculine language through her deception of Silence and the letter that she switches out for the French king, but is always ineffective, and is ultimately returned to feminine silence through her violent death. Eufemie and Eufeme also show how feminine language and feminine bodies are glossed by male interpreters, as meaning is put onto them in the same way gendered meaning is put onto silence. The *Roman de Silence* does not provide any clear answers for how silence or gender should be understood; rather, it shows the contradictions present in both of these concepts, and it shows the potential for meaning to be both constructed and subverted in both.

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